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# Winter Poems,

— BY —

Richard J. Matthews.

*Author of "Recollections of Ocean," and other poems, 1866*

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## INTRODUCTION.

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By a peaceful and happy Canadian hearth these songs were made. I have hope that by other happy hearths they will be prized, and with an approved garland of Canadian poetry hereafter be preserved.

THE AUTHOR.

London, Ontario, 1871.

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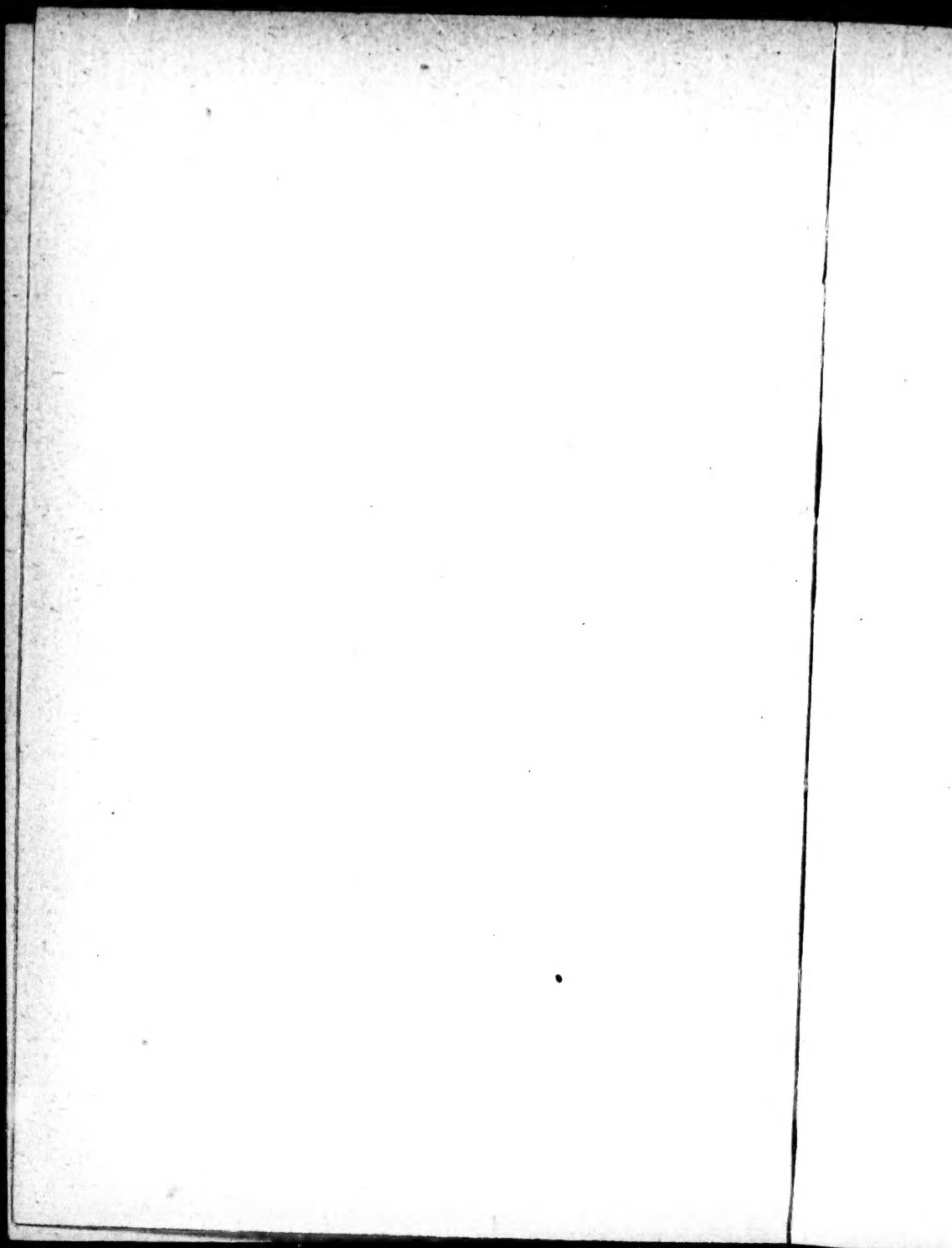
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## WINTER POEMS.

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### THE SNOW.

Soft, and fast, the snow flakes fall,  
Over trees and turrets tall,  
Lodging on ten thousand roofs,  
Trodden under many hoofs ;  
Carried o'er the muffled tracks,  
On the hurried travellers backs ;  
Melted on the ruby lips  
Of the maiden, as she trips :  
Crusted on the hoary hair  
Of the aged passer there ;  
Rounded, for the skirmish meet,  
By the urchins in the street ;  
Drifted to the lowly door,  
Of the ill-provided poor ;  
Slipping from the sapless bough,

Lost within the river now ;  
Darkening the eye of heaven,  
Overhead the wintry even.

Like the steppings of the sprite,  
Falling silent through the night ;  
Lending earth a robe of white,  
Fitted to the vale and height—  
Robe whose fringes will be torn  
With the sun and air of morn ;  
Type of heavenly purity,  
Soon our earth will sully thee !  
Yet thy virtues we shall know,  
Ere through gutters thou wilt flow :  
Smooth for mart and pleasure train  
Thou wilt make the rugged plain ;  
Glimmer on the lonely way,  
When the moon has sheathed her ray ;  
Be the coverlet to shield  
Grain fall-planted in the field ;  
Guard the tendrils of the flowers,

Through the wildest wintry hours;  
Feed the arteries of earth,  
Give to spring a better birth;  
And when lost in summer rain,  
Who would not, in season fain,  
See thee mantle earth again.

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### CHRISTMAS.

We know thou'rt come, old Christmas time,  
The bells fling out a merry chime,  
Aloft the gray church tower;  
Earth's canopy is spangled bright,  
The hyrst, and down, snow-mantled white,—  
The clock has told the hour.

There's welcome for thee, Christmas time,  
In hut and hall, of every clime,  
How many will rejoice!  
The children wakened, ask for thee,  
And lovers, 'neath the festoon'd tree,  
Embrace and kiss their choice.

Peal sweet, ye bells ! and mortals, sing !—

It is the birthday of a King—

A King all Kings above—

Whose stars illumine the flitting night ;

Whose throne is built beyond their height,

From whence he came with love.

Sing, mortals ! imitate those strains

Which swept, of old, o'er Beth'lem's plains,

When shepherds heard the sound—

When angels carolled in the sky,— [high,

When "Peace, Good Will," was trumped on

And glory shone around.

Oh ! peace, good will, of heaven born,

Reverberate this Christmas morn—

Pervade enlightened man :

Inspire him, in his transient stay,

To love his fellow while he may,

And lift him when he can.

Peal, bells ! and while the yule log glows,

And day, and year, approaches close,

And twilight's shadows fall,  
Come voices, with the fitful blast,  
Go faces, in the shades that passed,  
Of some we would recall

To mind—for they are not of earth—  
Who sing, we trust, a Saviour's birth,  
In clearest, sweetest lay,  
Where festive seasons never end—  
Where friend goes out no more from friend,  
But Christmas every day !

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### THE OLD YEAR.

We watch beside the expiring year,  
The fire is low, and the night is drear ;  
The fitful wind howls adown the lane,  
And clings the snow to the frozen pane,  
'Tis lonely here, old year !

But in brighter scenes thou wert our friend,  
And we'll tend thee well unto the end.

Old year, what more can we do for thee ?  
We'd have thee live, but it cannot be,  
Give us thy hand, old year !

Glassy his eyes are becoming now :  
Stands the death-damp on his wrinkled brow :  
Alas ! the slim pulse is nearly done,  
The soul of our friend is all but gone,  
Thou hearest not, old year !

One short embrace of the new and old,  
Of soul and soul, on that threshold cold :  
Within the portal that step we hear,  
The dial's hands from the death dots veer,  
Gone is the wasted year !

Come mourners in with a noiseless tread,  
To here, where the good old year lies dead ;  
Help us forever to close these eyes,  
Fixed on the spirit-path through the skies,  
And then inter the year :

Under the stars, in the waning west,  
Where there is sweet and oblivious rest,  
Deep in that sepulchre vast and old,  
Where are the ashes of years untold  
Bury the dead old year.

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### THE NEW YEAR.

In heaven's height  
Are stars to-night,  
Which saw, and after us will see,  
In death and birth  
The things of earth,  
And yawnings of eternity :  
That ocean which, within these hours,  
Is rolling round this world of ours.

But sit in grief,  
Our spirits brief,  
The entered morning augurs fair ;  
The old year gone,

A happy one,  
True to the world, has left his heir ;  
While tongues are telling, in the towers,  
Throb hopefully these hearts of ours.

We hail thee in !  
Young year thy kin  
Were dear to mortals ere our time ;  
We'll fondle thee,  
And hope to be  
Companioned with thee, in thy prime,  
When softer than the snow are showers,  
Descending on this world of ours,

When zephyrs blow,  
And rivers flow,  
Unfettered, to the summer sea ;  
Thy evening rest,  
Within the west,  
Beneath a golden canopy ;  
Thy banquets spread in blossomed bowers  
When fairest is this world of ours.

Ye swaying bells,  
With clearest swells,  
Proclaim the year to earth and sky :  
O'er naked woods,  
And frozen floods,  
While mortals raise their carols high :  
Or bowed in temples, through these hours,  
Adore the great Jehovah, ours.

Who gives us time,  
For steps, to climb  
Unto the summit of His will :  
And condescends,  
For gracious ends,  
To stay our faltering feet, until,  
Uplifted o'er pollution's powers,  
We taste the bliss, by purchase, ours.

With morning's beams,  
The Orient gleams.  
The iron tongues in towers are still.

The toiling wight

Essays to light

His lamp, while, o'er the western hill,

Dimmer the weeping stars appear.

Bright Sol will soon instal the year.

New year, well laden be thy hours

With blessings, for this world of ours.

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### THE WINTRY MORN.

Clocks alarming,

Couches charming,

In the early wintry morn ;

Kindled tapers,

Frosty vapours,

In the crispy wintry morn :

When our sturdy sons are stirring,

To prepare for honest toil.

Timely bedded,  
Steady headed,  
For the working wintry morn ;  
Thanks fresh given  
Unto heaven,  
In every wintry morn,  
When our goodly sons make ready  
For their honorable toil.

Clothed in hurry,  
Fed in flurry,  
(Should they be in wintry morn),  
Sallies witty,  
Sprightly ditty  
In that time-pressed wintry morn,  
Will cheer our sons vivacious  
To their profitable toil.

Bitter blowing,  
With the snowing,  
In the moon-drowned wintry morn ;

• Whitened high-ways,  
Hidden by-ways,  
In the muffled wintry morn :  
When our hardy sons are pressing  
To invigorating toil.

Planets gleaming,  
Chimneys steaming,  
In the slippery wintry morn ;  
Mastiffs baying,  
Vagrants straying,  
In the dreary wintry morn :  
When for weal of home and country,  
Go our sons to steady toil.

And their vigour  
Braves the rigour  
Of the bitter wintry morn :  
And attending,  
On their wending,  
In the trying wintry morn,  
Is God's help, for their adhesion  
Unto vice-preventing toil.

## THE SKATE.

Come away, my beauteous Kate—

Oh, come away !

Ere the wintry night is late,

Oh, come away !

To the frozen flood,

By the naked wood.

Leave the place where 'Tabby purrs,

And come away :

Here are skates, put on your furs,

And come away,

To the frozen flood,

By the naked wood.

Let alone, to-night, the lyre,

The song be still :

Gay companions of thy fire

Are 'neath the hill,

On the frozen flood,

By the naked wood.

Still and frosty is the night,  
And we're away,  
Moon and stars are beaming bright,  
To light our way  
To the frozen flood,  
By the naked wood.

Here your foot my charming Kate—  
Your dainty foot—  
I, with joy, the shining skate  
Will on it put,  
By the naked wood,  
On the frozen flood.

Smooth the ice, give me your hand,  
Away we flee ;  
Who, among the skating band,  
So gay as we ?  
On the frozen flood,  
By the naked wood.

Up again, beyond the fall,  
From home a mile ;

Trips are in the paths of all,  
Away ! with smile,  
On the frozen flood,  
By the naked wood.

But the ice is flimsy there—  
Our pace be slow !  
Pleasure is prolonged with care,  
Now home we go,  
On the frozen flood,  
By the naked wood.

Late, love, late ! but we are home,  
And all is well :  
Kate—good night ! in time to come  
We'll love to dwell  
On skatings good,  
O'er the frozen flood.

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### THE WANDERING DOG.

"Let in the wandering dog," said little Jane,  
Standing in winter by the frozen pane,  
"Let in the wandering dog."

“Through the deep snow he goes unsteadily,  
Sickly, and hungry, surely he must be,  
Let in the wandering dog.”

“No dog have we for to caress or treat,  
And scraps are left from every meal we eat,  
Let in the wandering dog.”

“Drear night is coming, with fresh drifts of snow,  
Which, ere the morning, he will lie below,  
Let in the wandering dog,”

“Oh ! should he perish by our door, 'twere sad,  
When we had means to make the wretched glad,  
Let in the wandering dog,”

“But he is worthless, else he would not roam,  
'Or may be mad,' said some within that home,  
We can't let in the dog !”

'Till dusk the great dog lingered by the gate,  
While vainly sued that gentle advocate,  
“Let in the wandering dog.”

Then howling night possessed the wintry earth,  
Then closer drew that household to the hearth,  
Where was the wandering dog ?

Not in the storm ! for Jane, by stealth, had led  
The wanderer to shelter, food, and bed—  
She'd housed the wandering dog ;

And—for the dog within the storm was not—  
Sweeter than ever slumbered on her cot,  
Nor heard the wandering dog,

Who, in the midnight, lifted an alarm,  
When the armed robber came that home to harm :  
So true the wandering dog !

And gripped the throttle of the burglar grim,  
And cast him down, but got a stab from him—  
Stabbed was the wandering dog.

And both were found at morn, without the shed,  
Deep in the blood-stain'd snow, and both were dead,  
Then praised they all the dog !

**THE SLEIGH RIDE.**

Over the snow we fly,  
Snug in our sled,  
Lovely Clara and I,  
Others in bed—  
Over the snow together!

Over the sparkling snows,  
With tinklings sweet,  
Proudly our courser goes,  
Charlie is fleet,  
Over the snow together!

Muffled from top to toe,  
Sunny in soul,  
Merrily now we go,  
Crossing the toll,  
Over the snow together!

Swift by the river's side,  
Starry the sky:

Sombre were stars beside  
Clara's bright eye,  
Over the snow together !

Nought for the winds we care,  
Chilly as death,  
Fragrant as summer air  
Clara's soft breath—  
Over the snow together !

Pass we the tardy hacks,  
Nobody nigh,  
Out upon lonely tracks  
Lovers are sly—  
Over the snow together !

Oh ! what a happy trip,—  
Bliss upon bliss,—  
Clara's beautiful lip  
Rings, with a kiss,  
Over the snow together !

Hide not chaste moon, with trees,  
Thy silvery light,

Heaven our wooing sees,  
Honour is bright !  
Over the snow together !  
For, where the lights appear,  
Faint in the west,  
There is our home, and cheer,  
There we will rest,  
Over the snow together !  
Steadily now we glide,  
Ho ! we alight,  
Clara, thou art my bride,  
Rapturous plight—  
On to the goal together !

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### THE CAT.

Feline friend, I hear thy purr,  
Now I feel thy brindled fur,  
Friendly smooth upon my cheek,

Signing what thou canst not speak :  
Wanting me to stroke thy head,  
Looking for a gift of bread,  
Off the supper meal I use  
Which, in sooth, I'll not refuse ;  
For with thee I'll have my way,  
Differing from those, who say—  
"Diet sparingly your cat,  
And 'twill better hunt the rat"—  
Give thee trust, and meat, for ne'er  
Knew I guardians, anywhere,  
Who could make domestics good,  
By withholding faith or food.

From my shoulder coming down,  
Brindled friend thy bullet crown  
Shows the signs of recent fight :  
Thou wert out, again, last night,  
'Neath the starlight—'twixt the roofs—  
When went by the horses hoofs :—  
Bearing from the dazing dance  
Some who, in that night perchance,

In the giddy circumstance—  
Parted with their innocence—  
When I tried to sleep, but failed,  
With the way thy felines wailed.

Tom, thou wert the prettiest  
Kitten at thy mother's breast,  
There were four, including thee,  
But the river cancelled three :  
Thus thou wert preserved a pet,  
Yea ! and thou art cherished yet :  
But thy wandering of late,  
Makes me anxious for thy fate,  
Let me ponder on thy state.  
Neck, and ears, and eyes are scratched—  
Surely thou wert overmatched ;  
And from bullet at thee aimed,  
Thy white foot, I see, is maimed :  
Even now upon the rug,  
Lying by the log fire snug,  
(While the tempest lifts its ire,  
And the sparkles crackle higher,)

Thou art starting from a doze,  
As if warring with thy foes ;  
And the hair, where it is black,  
Elevates upon thy back ;  
And the daggers of thy paws  
Glitter by the fender's claws :  
Now the little child might fear  
For to hang upon thine ear.

Ah ! my friend, thou must amend,  
Or I'll cease to style thee friend,  
Though beside my pen and sheet  
Often thou hast taken seat—  
Oft hast given knowing wink,  
When I stretched to take the ink,  
That would seal the slippery thought,  
From the well of study brought,—  
Thou must mend, or coarser berth  
Will be thine, without this hearth :  
Gentle natures will recoil  
From the votaries of broil.  
Mend ! or it will give my heart

Sorrow, thus from thee to part—  
Sorrow that, with war and wives,  
Thy traditional nine lives  
Will count less for thee, when rent,  
Than one short life, rightly spent.

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### THE FIRE.

Glare as we start from sleep,  
Glare on the midnight sky ;  
Glare on the turret steep,  
Glare from the dwellings nigh,  
On fire in the winter's night.

Cries that arouse the brave,  
Cries that distract the night ;  
Cries as they haste to save,  
Cries as they gird to fight  
The fire, in the winter's night.

Haste in the house ablaze,  
Haste in the hose-man's hall ;

Haste in the white highways,  
Haste where the chattels fall,  
By fire in the winter's night.

Bells in alarmed homes,  
Bells on the engine cars ;  
Bells in the lofty domes,  
Bells, to the scattered stars,  
Tell fire in the winter's night.

Crash where they raze and hack,  
Crash where they crowd and roar ;  
Crash when, to heaven's black,  
Higher the fierce flames soar,  
O'er fire in the winter's night.

Spray through the cind'ry air,  
Spray through the red-ribbed fire ;  
Spray on the branch-man there,  
Spray that is mounting higher,  
O'er fire in the winter's night.

Theft where the guardian calls,  
Theft where the gazers swell ;  
Theft in the gutted halls,  
Theft where the gallant dwell,  
What hell in the winter's night !

Smoke when the flame is whelmed,  
Smoke when the gable falls ;  
Smoke when the victor helmed  
"Home" on the bugle calls,  
From fire in the winter's night.

Loss to the homeless wight,  
Loss to the city's wealth ;  
Loss counted oft too light,  
Loss to the fireman's health,  
From fire in the winter's night.